

Luke 16:13

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-16/luke-1613/>

Jesus reminds His disciples that they can only have one master; it is impossible to serve two. He applies this truth to God and Money, again warning them that they cannot serve both. They will have to choose.

This parallel gospel accounts for these teachings is found in Matthew 6:24.

Jesus repeats and explains simple truth from His Sermon on the Mount. (It is likely that Jesus often repeated many of His teachings, sayings, and parables many times.) The simple truth was: *No servant can serve two masters* (Matthew 6:24).

This statement is given here in the context of Jesus's teachings about how His disciples should view earthly *money* regarding eternity. Just prior to Jesus recalling how *No servant can serve two masters*, He told them:

- “The Parable of the Unrighteous Steward” where Jesus encouraged His disciples to be more shrewd by using reciprocity to advance their eternal ambitions by using earthly *money* to their advantage (Luke 16:1-9).
- The Faithfulness Principle which is “He who faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10). And He made plain to His disciples that this principle would be applied to how they live out the very little things of this life and the multiplying effects that it would have in what responsibilities they would be entrusted with in the next (Luke 16:11-12).

When Jesus said, *No servant can serve two masters*, He was not issuing a command, but stating an observable fact.

Whenever a servant or a heart has *two masters* giving him orders, *he will* only be able to follow *one* of them. Jesus illustrates through the: *For either he will hate the one* (the first master) *and love the other* (the second master), *or he will be devoted to one* (the second master) *and despise the other* (the first master.) He *cannot serve and be devoted* to both. Indeed, he cannot even *love* both. The servant will follow either *the one* or *the other*.

Jesus then names the *two masters*. *You cannot serve God and wealth*. Again, this is not a command, but a statement about how reality works. Only one of these *masters* can be the controlling influence of your life.

If *God* is your master, *you will love* Him and *be devoted to* Him. You will seek the reward of pleasing Him. You will, like Jesus, *despise* anything that keeps you from pleasing Him ([Hebrews](#)

[12:2](#)). This would include the demands, the ridicule, shame, or persecution that come from anything in the world that tries to be your *master*. If *God* is our master, our primary concern is not to try to get ahead in this life by accumulating *wealth*. We will *despise* the lust for *wealth* compared to following God. We will be a generous and wise steward of the *wealth* He grants into our hands. Instead of storing up our *wealth* on earth, and trusting in it to bring us fulfillment, we will forward it (and our hearts) to heaven (Matthew 6:21).

If *wealth* is our master, we will lust for it and *be devoted* to its demands. We will be consumed by the pursuit of hoarding it. The lust for *wealth* is a master that is never satisfied. This principle is stated clearly in the Old Testament: “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 5:10). The lust for *wealth* (a common master of this world and its kingdoms) is at direct odds with *God* and His kingdom.

If the lust for *wealth* is our master, we *will hate God* and His commands to *love* and serve other people. Instead of using whatever *wealth* that *God* puts into our hands to enlarge His kingdom and bless others (and according to Jesus’s teachings, bless ourselves in the process), we defiantly seek to carve out our own kingdom in opposition to *God*. When people have *wealth* as a master, it leads to disharmony and unrighteousness. When we view *wealth* in comparison to others, then we must have “more” than the one to whom we compare. We seek to push them down as well as to elevate ourselves. As the Apostle Paul tells Timothy, “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Again, we see that the ultimate issue pertains to the inner workings of the heart and its loves. There may be *two* (or more) *masters* barking out commands, but the servant can only choose to follow *one* of them. When desires are in conflict, the heart will follow *the one* it loves.

In telling His disciples, *You cannot serve God and wealth*, Jesus is asking them: which of these *two masters* are you going to *love*? Which *will you despise*? Which *will you serve*? It has a ring of Joshua 24:15, “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...” It is helpful to remember that Jesus was publicly teaching these things to His disciples (though the Pharisees were listening and scoffing at Him—Luke 6:14). Because the disciples were already believers He was not teaching them how to be born into God’s family. Jesus was teaching them how to choose perspectives and actions that lead to our greatest benefit. Being enslaved to *wealth* is clearly not in our best interest.

The Apostle Paul tells us another benefit we gain when we do not have *wealth* as a *master*. We learn to be content (Philippians 4:11-13). When we are not living a life of comparison, we can enjoy what we have, rather than being enslaved to the master of “More.”

Jesus’s statement *You cannot serve God and wealth* is connected to the previous teachings of Luke 16. They all have to do with money.

In “the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward” (Luke 16:1-9), Jesus taught that the principle of reciprocity carries over into the New Earth. He encouraged His disciples to shrewdly invest the

temporary wealth of their earthly possessions in everlasting things—people—before their money becomes worthless.

In the parallel principles on faithfulness (Luke 16:10) and the rhetorical questions that follow (Luke 16:11-12), Jesus taught His disciples that if they are faithful with temporary wealth in this life, God will entrust them to steward true riches in the life to come. And that if they are not faithful in the little things now, God won't give them much responsibility later.

By repeating His saying about *not* being able to *serve God and wealth* in this life on earth, Jesus was warning His disciples that one of their greatest temptations will be to misuse and misallocate earthly *wealth*. They will be tempted to make the tool God has entrusted to them (money) into their Master. And if they give into this temptation and make wealth an idol, they will miss out on the greater treasures of living in peace in this life, as well as gaining the great reward of being entrusted responsibility to reign with Jesus in Kingdom Come.

Biblical Text

13 No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.